

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE I-10

LOS ANGELES TIMES
9 MAY 1983

Would Welcome CIA Aid, Anti-Sandinista Rebel Says

By DON SHANNON, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—A Notre Dame graduate now leading a rebel movement fighting the Sandinista government of Nicaragua says he knows of no CIA money coming to his organization but suspects that there is some and makes no apologies if it is true.

Adolfo Calero Portocarrero is one of seven civilian directors of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, denounced by the Marxist-led Sandinista government of this homeland as a "terrorist group" operating from Honduras with backing from the Reagan Administration. Asked at a recent meeting with reporters if CIA support jeopardizes the force's credibility, he replied:

"No, the CIA is part of the U.S. government."

Calero said the House Intelligence Committee acted "with insufficient knowledge of the facts" when it voted last week to cut off funds for counterrevolutionary activity in Nicaragua. He expressed satisfaction with the Senate Intelligence Committee's action Friday, which would continue such financing until Sept. 30 and reassess Administration policy then.

"This gives us time," he said. "It's a balanced decision. I don't want the Administration to give us help with its eyes closed."

Calero acknowledged that former supporters of the late Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza have joined his rebel group—"We can't help but use former National Guardsmen"—but he said that one-time Somocistas, as the fallen dictator's supporters were called, fill the ranks of the Sandinistas as well.

"The Sandinistas have betrayed the (Nicaraguan) revolution and have taken on the character of the Somocistas," Calero said.

A one-time businessman who managed the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Managua, Calero said he opposed the Somoza dynasty and was jailed for his political views, the last time for helping to organize a strike against the Somoza regime just before its collapse.

He never joined the Sandinistas, he said, giving them "the benefit of the doubt for a long time" and trying to help rebuild the post-revolutionary economy. He left the country last December and now lives in Costa Rica.

Rebels Meet Little Resistance

Calero placed the strength of Democratic Force's guerrillas at "seven to eight thousand" and conceded that they have no chance to defeat the large Sandinista army and militia. He said, however, that commando units have penetrated to within 60 miles of Managua, encountering little resistance and inflicting casualties on government forces at a rate of 40 to one.

"The Sandinistas are sending young fanatics to fight us in the north," he said. "When they get killed, they have big burial ceremonies to rally the people, but it's been counterproductive because the people see the resistance is serious. *Contra* (for counterrevolutionary) is now a nice word in Nicaragua."

The 51-year-old Nicaraguan said the Democratic Force is seeking only to pressure the Sandinistas into honoring their 1979 pledge to the Organization of American States: to guarantee individual freedoms and to hold elections under international supervision.

The white-haired Calero, who obtained a science degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1953 and took management courses at Syracuse University in 1962, said the Sandinistas have created economic chaos with shortages of food and basic goods in a country of small businesses and farms that once exported food.

Of the Sandinistas' claimed achievements, he said: "They say they're providing health care but you can't find an aspirin in the country. The literacy campaign was a good idea, but a teen-ager can't teach an adult to read in two months, and they've never issued a report on the program."

Unless the Sandinistas are ousted, Calero said, the United States will "find itself involved in a real war in Central America." He asserted that Guatemalan Communists have infiltrated Guatemalan refugee camps in southern Mexico and said that if Marxists expand their domination of Central American government, Mexico will be an eventual target.

However, the Nicaraguan said he doubts that Central Americans will succumb to Marxism.

While the Sandinistas picked Bulgaria to be Nicaragua's Marxist "sister state," he said, "Personally, I'd rather have Wisconsin."